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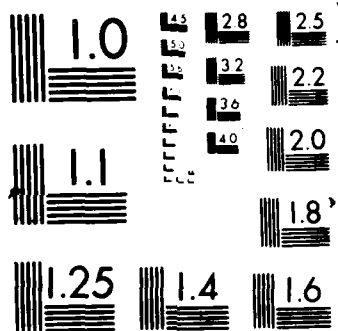
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THE REPORTING OF TERRORISM BY THE MEDIA

by

Captain Steven E. Hodgkins  
United States Air Force

THESIS

total number of pages: 77

Submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF SCIENCE

IN

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

AT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

1987

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM	
1. REPORT NUMBER AFIT/CI/NR 87-38T	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER <b>A185 870</b>	
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Reporting Of Terrorism By The Media		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED THESIS/DISSERTATION	
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER	
7. AUTHOR(s) Steven E. Hodgkins		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)	
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS AFIT STUDENT AT: California State University		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS	
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS AFIT/NR WPAFB OH 45433-6583		12. REPORT DATE 1987	
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 77	
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report)  UNCLASSIFIED	
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE	
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report)  APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED			
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)			
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: IAW AFR 190-1		<b>Lynn E. Wolaver</b> <b>LYNN E. WOLAVER</b> 17 Aug 87 Dean for Research and Professional Development AFIT/NR	
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)			
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) ATTACHED			

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

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Abstract  
of  
THE REPORTING OF TERRORISM BY THE MEDIA  
by  
Steven E. Hodgkins

Statement of Problem:

Over the past two decades, the impact of terrorism has significantly increased. The acts themselves have become drastically more brutal. In order for terrorists to achieve their goals and instill fear, they must spread their message. The news media of the free world is the vehicle terrorists have selected to transmit that message. Some agree the media is being manipulated by terrorists, in that terrorist attacks have been designed specifically for the news cameras, and the press cannot ignore the action-packed drama terrorism produces.

Some believe publicity given to terrorists increases the likelihood of future acts of terrorism. Others find fault with journalists for the way they report terrorist incidents. Still other experts feel the news media aids in assuring the safety and release of hostages. The goal of this study is to examine the subject of media-covered terrorism and to determine if we are proceeding in the proper direction in reporting on terrorist violence.

Sources of Data:

Information for this research comes from the available professional journals and periodicals, books written by experts in the fields of terrorism, journalism, law enforcement and psychology, and various newspaper and magazine articles. These diverse disciplines provide a well-balanced account of the major issues involved with the topic.

Conclusions Reached:

Terrorism has been successful in the past and it is safe to assume terrorism will continue well into the future. Both terrorists and the media benefit from each other. Responsible journalism is a must, but terrorism should be reported and not supported. It is highly unlikely our news media will be censored by the government, but self-imposed reporting guidelines are needed and must be followed by journalists.

Future research is needed to determine the psychological implications involved with the viewing of extensive terrorist violence on television.



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THE REPORTING OF TERRORISM BY THE MEDIA

Steven E. Hodgkins  
B.A., Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, 1983

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTERS OF SCIENCE

IN

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

AT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SUMMER  
1987

THE REPORTING OF TERRORISM BY THE MEDIA

A Thesis

by

Steven E. Hodgkins

Approved by:

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Dr. Thomas R. Phelps

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Name of Student STEVEN E. HODGKINS

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Thomas R. Phelps, Graduate Coordinator  
Department of Criminal Justice

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Abstract  
of  
THE REPORTING OF TERRORISM BY THE MEDIA  
by  
Steven E. Hodgkins

Statement of Problem:

Over the past two decades, the impact of terrorism has significantly increased with respect to the amounts of terrorist violence experienced in earlier years. The acts themselves have become drastically brutal. Nowadays, terrorists have no respect for life or limb, they choose to kill indiscriminately. In order for terrorists to achieve their goals and instill fear, they must spread their message. The news media of the free world is the vehicle terrorists have selected to transmit that message. Some agree the media is being manipulated by the terrorists, in that terrorist attacks have been designed specifically for the news cameras, and the press cannot ignore the action-packed drama terrorism produces.

Some experts believe the publicity given to terrorists increases the likelihood of future acts of terrorism. Others find fault with the manner in which journalists report terrorist incidents. They believe terrorists are glorified, their acts sensationalized, and the extent of coverage and speculation actually endangers hostages and hampers rescue efforts. Still other experts feel the news media aids in assuring the safety and release of hostages. The goal of this study is to examine literature on the subject of media-covered terrorism and to determine if we are proceeding in the

proper direction in reporting on terrorist violence

#### Sources of Data.

Information for this research comes from the available professional journals and periodicals, books written by experts in the fields of terrorism, journalism, law enforcement and psychology, and various newspaper and magazine articles. These diverse disciplines provide a well-balanced account of the major issues involved with the topic.

#### Conclusions Reached

Terrorism has been relatively successful in the past. It is a cost efficient way for small groups and countries to make their views known and to compete on a more level basis with stronger entities. It is, therefore, safe to assume terrorism will continue to be a major problem in the future. Both terrorists and the media benefit from each other. Responsible journalism is a must, but terrorism should be reported and not supported. It is highly unlikely our news media will be censored by the government, but self-imposed reporting guidelines are needed and must be followed by journalists.

Future research is needed to determine the psychological implications involved with the viewing of extensive terrorist violence on television

Thomas R. Phelps \_\_\_\_\_

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife Judy who stood beside me every step of the way. Without her support, this project would never have been completed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the United States Air Force for the opportunity to pursue this project. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Thomas R. Phelps and Dr. James M. Poland for their invaluable guidance and assistance.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Terrorist attacks have increased dramatically throughout the world. These activities have recently been more brutal and, of course, extensively covered by the news media. Terrorists by their very nature seek to instill fear and gather support for their causes. Thus, the more comprehensive the coverage of such events, the more successful the terrorists become in achieving their goals. "The object of terrorism," as Lenin once said, "is to terrorize. In order to do so it has to send a message to those who are to be terrorized."<sup>1</sup> Terrorist groups have been able to exploit the news media, especially the television networks, into broadcasting their propaganda. In doing so, this attention not only increases fear, but also the potential for other, sometimes more sensational acts of violence. It can be said that a repetitious effect takes place, spurring on the continuance of similar or even more devastating terror-related actions.

A major consequence resulting from extensive media coverage of terrorism is the exportation of violent techniques which, in turn, often trigger similar extreme actions by other individuals or groups. An expert in this field, Richard Clutterbuck, stated, "Ideas travel... through the normal news media... people watching and listening to the reports get ideas about doing the same things themselves. That is, the more publicity given to bomb

scares, the more bomb scares there are likely to be, and reports about hijacking lead to more plane hijackings."<sup>2</sup>

Brian M. Jenkins, an expert on terrorism for the Rand Corporation, mentioned that terrorists depend on the news media to reach their audience. Because reporting news is the primary role of the media, they are often placed in an uncomfortable position by appearing to be an accomplice to the terrorists. Some say that by their reporting, the media actually exaggerates the problem of terrorism thereby provoking overreaction, providing a degree of legitimacy upon them, and inspiring others to become terrorists.<sup>3</sup>

"The electronic media, more so than print media, influences public opinion by defining which national and international issues become significant, and shapes public debates by the television images conveyed to the American audience. Small clandestine groups manipulate our sophisticated communication technology to obtain immediate publicity and global coverage as a means to gain their particular political goals. At the same time, this technology facilitates the regional and global spreading of terrorism, particularly generating imitative behavior by other dissatisfied groups."<sup>4</sup> If these statements are true-- that excessive publicity supports the goals of terrorists and increases the likelihood of future terrorist acts, should coverage of such events be cancelled? Should blackouts be imposed?

In a free democracy such as the United States, the people have many protected rights. One of these is the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and the right to a free press. During terrorist situations, would news black outs be in violation of the First Amendment? Some scholars argue no, while others firmly believe the public maintains the right to be kept informed regardless of the



situation or circumstances

A direct relationship seems to exist between the news media and terrorists. The two groups seem to feed off of each other in a symbiotic fashion and therefore enhance their continued existences. Both groups have something to gain by engaging in their respective activities. Terrorists hope to bring about change by employing negative enhancement and spreading fear, while the media wishes to increase their ratings by reporting bizarre and captivating information. Is the freedom of the press being abused by aggressive journalists who sensationalize their stories? Is it possible that responsible journalism is being overlooked and some reporters are giving credibility to the terrorist groups?

Another major controversy exists over whether the media actually helps or hinders the situation while providing their live "on-scene" coverage. In many cases, terrorist experts and responding agencies argue that the media hampers rescue efforts and often places the lives of the rescuers and hostages in danger. Professionals in the field of journalism disagree and state their coverage is vital in disseminating valuable information to the public so they can be informed of the facts as they happen. Some journalists also claim they have helped bring an end to terrorist/hostage episodes because their efforts have been able to create strong public opinion against terrorism, and by putting pressure on government officials to act swiftly in resolving these situations.

This study will be a research of available literature on key issues surrounding the relationship of terrorism and how it is reported by the media. The policies, procedures, arguments, and positions of terrorist experts, law enforcement officials, and media representatives will be

compiled and compared. Then, recommendations will be made for the future handling and reporting of terrorist incidents.

### Statement of Problem

Interest in this topic has increased in recent years. A Gallup study commissioned by the Times Mirror Company was conducted in the Summer of 1986. They found, "No single press issue has caused more debate during the 80's than the news media-terrorism relationship." In fact, when asked how they felt about the way news organizations covered international acts of terrorism, an incredible 98% of the public responded.<sup>5</sup> (See appendices A, B, C, D, E, F and G). The news media has a delicate and important task to perform. It is also true, violence by terror is a reality and may become more of a threat in the future. To limit the success rate of terrorists and to assure the safety of hostages and responding forces, we must study all available options relating to the reporting of terrorist activities and make the necessary adjustments to our current way of conducting business.

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study will be directed towards understanding the many controversies surrounding the topic of media-covered terrorism and its implications. Both media and terrorism experts must become aware of one another's responsibilities so they can perform their specialized tasks in harmony and ultimately attempt to gain better control over this international phenomenon known as terrorism. Presently, these two fields

seem to have a better success rate at combating each other than they do in controlling terrorism.

### Scope and Limitations of Study

This study focuses on important issues and the viewpoints of professionals in the fields of journalism, terrorism, politics (both national and international), law enforcement, and psychology. The practice of terrorism affects an almost unlimited array of disciplines, but this research will be limited to only the major areas expressed above. This study will identify and discuss these important issues which must be addressed in order to concentrate on a more successful solution in the reporting of terrorist attacks. An attempt will not be made here to study the psychodynamics of terrorist groups, their motivations, or ideologies. The major concern is the relationship of the media and terrorism, and the implications of techniques used by journalists when reporting terrorist violence.

The scope of this study will include a systematic review and a comparative analysis of literature pertinent to the subject matter.<sup>6</sup> The documentation gathered spans the previous ten years; this period is considered the most active and controversial concerning the media and terrorism. Studies and articles on this topic are abundant and thought-provoking. The findings of this research will provide the reader with an objective analysis of media-covered terrorism.

### Procedure and Methodology Used in Study

The majority of materials used to compile this work were taken from an extensive survey of the available professional journals in the fields of terrorism, journalism, law enforcement, and psychology. Other sources were periodicals, books, scholarly studies, and surveys on this topic.

In reviewing the particular writings of the four fields, a more thorough and objective approach was taken in the construction of this thesis. A review of only one of these fields would provide a study with limited scope. Therefore, a concerted effort was made to present the viewpoints of leaders in each of these major disciplines. By providing the various positions of those concerned, one will quickly become familiar with the many emerging issues and controversies surrounding this issue. This study will take the shape of a comparative content analysis.

### Definition of terms

1. First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."<sup>7</sup>
2. Hostage: "A person given or held as security for the performance of certain actions, promises, etc., by another."<sup>8</sup>
3. Journalism: "The occupation of reporting, writing, editing, photographing, or broadcasting news or of conducting any

news organization as a business."<sup>9</sup>

4. Sensationalism: "Subject matter, language, or style designed to amaze or thrill."<sup>10</sup>
5. Symbiosis: "The living together of two dissimilar organisms," (or groups), "especially when this association is mutually beneficial."<sup>11</sup>
6. Terrorism: by Grant Wardlaw -- "...terrorism is the use, or threat of use, of violence by an individual or group, whether acting for or in opposition to established authority, when such action is designed to create extreme anxiety and/or fear inducing effects in a target group larger than the immediate victims with the purpose of coercing that group into acceding to the political demands of the perpetrators."<sup>12</sup>

#### Organization of Remainder of Study

This thesis is comprised of four separate chapters. Chapter I is the introduction to "The Reporting of Terrorism by the Media." Chapter II contains the review of literature pertaining to this topic, including professional journals, periodicals, books, and magazine and newspaper articles. The principal theme deals with issues and controversies as expressed by the experts. Chapter III is a listing of specific hostage/terrorist incidents which were either helped or hindered by the media's actions. In Chapter IV, a series of conclusions are drawn from this study. It presents recommendations for dealing with the enormous problems associated with the media coverage of terrorism.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Lord Chalfont, "Terrorism, Television, and Philosophic Doubt," Terrorism, an International Journal 9, no. 3 (1987) 304.

<sup>2</sup> Yonah Alexander, "Terrorism, the Media and the Police," Police Studies 1, no. 2 (June 1978) 47.

<sup>3</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, The Psychological Implications of Media-Covered Terrorism (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1981), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Sandra Wurth-Hough, "Network News Coverage Of Terrorism: The Early Years," Terrorism, an International Journal 6, no. 3 (1983) 403-4.

<sup>5</sup> Robert F. Erduru, The People and The Press no. 2 of The Times Mirror Investigation of Public Attitudes Toward the News Media, (Los Angeles: Times Mirror Company, 1986), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Larry A. Buckingham, "The Red Brigades: A Description of A Terrorist Organization" (Master's Thesis, Cal State Univ., Sacramento, 1982), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Nicholas N. Kittrie and Eldon D. Wedlock, Jr., The Tree of Liberty (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), 76.

<sup>8</sup> "Hostage," The Random House College Dictionary, rev. ed. (1979).

<sup>9</sup> "Journalism," Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> "Sensationalism," Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> "Symbiosis," Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> John L. Martin, "The Media's Role In International Terrorism," Terrorism, an International Journal 8, no. 2 (1985) 129.

## CHAPTER II

### **Literature Review and Controversial Issues**

#### Background and Historical Review

When analyzing the background and historical literature dealing with media-covered terrorism, two basic, but significant themes always enter the picture. One is that the media with its excessive and irresponsible coverage of terrorist acts, actually assists the terrorists in achieving their desired goals. A few years ago, the Western world was led to believe that various groups such as the Baader-Meinhof gang, the Japanese United Red Army, and the Symbionese Liberation Army, to name a few, were substantial and larger than life. Their actions and demands were given excessive attention by the press. The West was captivated! The most ironic aspect of the whole situation was these groups were only comprised of between five and fifty members. Their biggest achievement was the enormous publicity bestowed upon them. Terrorists attempt to make themselves credible by gaining our attention.<sup>1</sup> This viewpoint is generally supported by a majority of law enforcement officials and terrorist experts. For future reference, these officials and experts will be referred to as "the authorities." The other theme is expressed by the journalism community. It is based on the public's right to be informed. The press believes with accurate information,

the public will make intelligent decisions about the issues. Also, by keeping the public informed, some journalists feel their investigative techniques display the horrifying facts of terrorism. In doing so, the viewing audience collectively abhors the violent acts of all terrorists.

In taking these two themes a bit further, the authorities believe the media, through their reporting, influence other terrorists to commit even more sensational acts of terror, and that the safety of hostages is decreased when live, on-scene coverage is provided. They also suggest the responding forces are hampered and/or are actually endangered as a direct result of the actions of ambitious reporters. The authorities contend if you limit media coverage of terrorist actions, there will be a decrease in acts of terror. They feel this to be true because, as Mrs. Thatcher put it, "The media provides the oxygen of publicity on which the terrorist and hijacker depend."<sup>2</sup> The media take exception to this statement as expressed in an M. L. Stein article entitled, "Covering Terrorism." Stein cited a fellow journalist, Thomas L. Friedman. Friedman's comments seem to accurately sum up the position of the media:

Terrorists are not just dancers waiting for the first reporter to come along. History does not wait for the camera. The people are there, the problems are there, the grievances are there, and the political motivations are there. Hard as it is for us to admit, there was terrorism before there was the high-speed press. He believes these acts of terrorism will occur with or without the media.<sup>3</sup>

He is correct in at least one respect. Terrorism is not something new. It is documented that terrorism has been practiced throughout ancient history in most civilizations known to man. Here in the 1980's, law enforcement experts feel because of the recent history of terrorist activity,



the facts do point towards a constantly growing symbiotic relationship between terrorists and the media. Journalism representatives say there is no concrete evidence to support that claim. In studying this topic, one immediately becomes aware of the constant arguing back and fourth. There is also however, a middle ground where experts in both fields recognize the other disciplines' problems and are at least willing to address the possibility of a "peaceful co-existence"

Chapter II is a literature review of the leading controversial issues as expressed by the experts. Information for this chapter was collected, and then compiled in a fashion to provide the reader with a broad perspective on the topic of terrorism and the media. This chapter has been broken down into nine separate sections. In these sections, the views and arguments of the concerned players are presented and discussed. The nine selected sections are

- The First Amendment
- Hostage Safety
- Increasing News Coverage
- Censorship of the Media
- Terrorist Manipulation of the Press
- Encouraging Future Acts of Terrorism
- Extent of News Coverage
- Psychological Effects of Viewing Terror-Related Violence
- Responsible Journalism

These nine categories do not cover all of the heavily debated issues surrounding this topic, but they do address the most prominent and more common disputes of our time

### First Amendment

The First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution is an important document, it protects United States citizens' rights of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. James Madison wrote

A popular Government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which Knowledge gives<sup>4</sup>

Mr. Madison clearly states the reasons why both the freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are invaluable for the successful existence of a free and democratic nation. After all, what Madison and the other Forefathers had previously experienced was a suppression of these and other privileges, or rights, while under British rule. Since colonial times, we have grown accustomed to these, as well as other rights, not enjoyed by the citizens of many foreign countries.

When the Bill of Rights was created, it was after a continued period of strict British domination. The colonists were subjected to punishment and ridicule by the British Crown for many reasons, one of the oldest was religious preference. Another was taxation of the colonies without proper representation. Then the controversy of the American Revolution was introduced. During the entire period of British rule, the colonists were not allowed to express their views if they were contrary to those of the Crown<sup>5</sup>. One can obviously see that when the Bill of Rights was drawn up, the framers had specific issues-of-the-time to protect themselves from. Should this historical two-hundred year old document be interpreted the

same today as it was when it was originally written?

When dealing with present day terrorism, some suggest the possibility of censorship or controlling the press in its reporting of this type of violence. For various reasons, which will be discussed in later sections, they argue that because of existing media practices in gathering and reporting terrorist incidents, the type of news presented may actually be more detrimental than beneficial to the viewing audience. In a case such as this, should the media's First Amendment protections be re-amended? Should they operate under controlling guidelines when dealing with terrorism? Journalists say no to this suggestion. They argue that the freedom of the press is the life-blood of their profession. Regardless of journalistic mistakes or excessive uses of their positions, the media are used to the tradition of a free press and its importance to our democratic form of government, and are against allowing controls being placed on their efforts.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of *Houchins v. KQED*, in June of 1978, the press attempted to use their first amendment rights as their platform after being denied access to an area where news was happening. The media wanted entry into an area which was not open to the public. This case was heard in the Supreme Court and Chief Justice Warren Burger contended, "Did KQED as a member of the media have a first-amendment right which entitled it to access superior to that of the general public?" The answer was "no." He also stated, "the right to speak and the right to publish do not carry with them the unrestrained right to gather information." It is important to note that the public is indeed excluded from the scene of a crime or disaster. Therefore, the courts are suggesting that the press may also be excluded.<sup>7</sup>

is a terrorist attack a crime, and can it be a disaster? Yes, on both accounts.

A major problem exists today between law enforcement officials and the press when the press is reporting ongoing terrorist/hostage situations. Of course the media should report newsworthy information, but how should the rights of the press be balanced when the lives of hostages are in danger, or the lives of the responding forces are jeopardized as a result of television coverage? The right to life is the most basic, and should prevail. The right to free speech should be limited when the right to life is in jeopardy.<sup>8</sup> First Amendment rights should not be considered absolute, especially when the potential for injury or loss of life exists.

Lawrence K. Grossman of NBC News was asked about exercising restraints when covering terrorist events and his position is as follows:

We recognize there is no absolute right to free press. The First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution exists not to benefit the press, but to protect the public's right to know. There are obvious restraints, which are both appropriate and necessary, that the press should itself impose on its coverage. . . Television should not report information that will endanger either the victims of terrorism or those who are trying to put an end to a terrorist episode. In such instances reporters should without question seek the guidance of authorities. It is also important not to get in the way of efforts to end a crisis. Information about the deployment of forces that would endanger lives if it became known to the terrorists should be withheld.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, Mr. Grossman is aware of the problems involved with this delicate situation and is willing to do something so as not to endanger lives. He supports a responsible, common sense approach to the reporting of terrorism, and is willing to set up guidelines for his agency. He is like most

other journalists, opposed to the government or any other outside group coming in and setting down policy for his reporters to follow. One problem with Mr. Grossman's common sense approach is when the on-scene reporter gets caught up in the heat of a terrorist incident, and because of his or her zeal for getting a scoop, loses sight of the "common sense approach." In journalism, the name of the game is competition. This competition can often overcome both the responsible and common sense approaches.

Journalist Robin Heid is editor of Metropolitan Magazine and in his article, "Should Government Control Media Reporting of Terrorism?", which came from a debate on the subject, a different perspective of the media's use of the First Amendment with respect to terrorism was expressed by one of the debating participants, Mr. Chris Dahle of Metropolitan State College. He asserted.

The First Amendment is most often evoked for media exploitation of terrorist activities. But we cannot allow the rest of our lives to be held hostage to blind adherence to the First Amendment, the First Amendment was never intended to be a tool to be used by the media to transform critical events into dramatic entertainment. Besides freedom of the press, the First Amendment of the American Constitution guarantees us the freedom to practice any religion we choose. But that right does not permit Satan worshippers to sacrifice virgins in public squares. We have learned to accept reasonable limits to some of our freedoms in order to protect the rest of our rights.<sup>10</sup>

As one might imagine, the debate over the usage of the First Amendment goes from one extreme to the other, and touches on all levels in between. Should we stick to the Amendment as it was written two hundred years ago? Shall we modify it to meet present day needs? Should it be amended when lives are in danger, or when the information is not in the best

interest of the public? The American people maintain the right to be kept informed, and the experts are wrestling with the question of to what extent?

### Hostage Safety

In order for terrorists to thoroughly exploit an act of terror, they must attract and hold audiences for as long as possible. One of the best ways to accomplish this goal is by kidnapping innocent people and holding them hostage. With hostages as bargaining chips, terrorists can express their demands, for the most part, without fear of an all out attack by counter-terrorist forces. Regardless of whether the terrorists harm the hostages or not, they have succeeded in gaining a captive audience. If demands are not met, hostages may be killed. If forces attempt a rescue mission, the terrorists again, may bring harm to the hostages. What effect does reporting of the event have in relationship to the safety of the hostages? The views are mixed.

In an article written by terrorist expert Yonah Alexander, in 1978, he offered his opinion on the subject. He believes the roles of the media are often detrimental, and jeopardize the authorities' controlling of the terrorist or hostage situations. He then went on to say there are certain instances where the media actually helps in keeping the level of bloodshed to a minimum. It was stated that news coverage of such events provides a source of ventilation for the terrorists to express their grievances. When they realize their messages are being broadcasted and that they are being taken seriously, their anger and frustration will subside, thus assuring the

safety of the hostages, as well as a peaceful solution to the entire hostage episode. If the terrorists perceive they are being treated with respect, "they are likely to see themselves part of, rather than outside, the system."<sup>11</sup>

Patrick Clawson agrees the media can be helpful in these types of conditions and takes the notion one step further:

In times of a hostage-taking crisis, media coverage can provide public officials with vital information, since the media often have greater ability than U. S. officials to get up close to the action and to report it quickly. During a hostage crisis, Cable News Network (CNN) can provide more up-to-date information than the State Department or CIA. Reporters also have greater access to the terrorists themselves, who often refuse to speak to government officials... The government already relies on CNN and other electronic media for fast-breaking news."<sup>12</sup> "At times, media coverage can prevent further deterioration of a situation. Jerry Levin, the CNN reporter held captive in Lebanon for over one year, argues that he owes his life to the extensive coverage given his captivity, since that coverage caused his captors to be concerned about the possible impact of his death. Letting a kidnapper vent his frustration by talking in front of a camera or into a microphone can help defuse tension."<sup>13</sup>

Many of the above comments sound reasonable and could hold merit. But there have been numerous instances where the reporters' investigative techniques have proven disastrous instead of helpful. One such case took place in October 1977. The captain of a hijacked Lufthansa passenger jet was murdered by the hijackers after the press reported the captain had passed on information to the authorities about the terrorists in the course of his normal radio transmissions. Until the media reported this news, the hijackers were not aware of the captain's courageous efforts.<sup>14</sup>

Even when hostages have not lost their lives, the disclosure of

valuable information by the press on occasion has threatened the safety of the hostages, and hampered the efforts of law enforcement. An example of this took place in the Washington, D. C. Courthouse in 1974. The incident took place in an area where police could observe the hostages and their captors through a two-way mirror. The police had snipers in position and could have used them effectively if any of the hostages were harmed. After the media publicized the two-way mirror, the kidnappers had the hostages cover the mirror with tape which immediately took away the law enforcement officials' advantage.<sup>15</sup> Luckily, this event ended without anyone being harmed.

In November 1986, former White House Press Secretary, Larry Speakes was answering questions on the White House lawn when he told the press corps that their excessive coverage and speculation dealing with the hostage situation in Lebanon, "has made administration efforts to free the remaining hostages 'extremely difficult.'" Speakes also suggested that media's speculation of a possible message being sent through the use of body language after they aired the tape of hostage David Jacobsen while he was still in captivity led to his being mistreated by his captors.<sup>16</sup> The message given to the press was to be more responsible in their reporting because their speculations could potentially bring harm to the remaining hostages.

The fact remains that this is an unsatisfactory position for both the authorities and the media. If some sort of compromise could be worked out between the two, the press could report important but non-harmful facts to the public and still assist authorities in their fight to control terrorism by supplying them with valuable information.



### Increasing News Coverage

Many have requested a cutback in the amount of coverage given to terrorists because they say the publicity encourages future terrorist attacks, and that terrorism itself would end if press coverage was denied. Michael Davies, president of the Associated Press Managing Editors and editor of the Hartford Courant, stated, "Publicity is the lifeblood of terrorism. Without it, these abominable acts against the innocent would wither quickly away." Ted Koppel wrote, "Without television, terrorism becomes rather like the philosopher's hypothetical tree falling in the forest--no one hears it fall and therefore it does not exist."<sup>17</sup> Even with these thoughts in mind, supporters of journalism still believe the media is a necessary and useful tool; given are four important reasons why:

First, the more the public knows about a terrorist group, the less likely it is to support that group. Second, lack of coverage is likely to have little impact on terrorists who rely on state sponsorship; they do not need publicity to generate recruits or sympathy. Third, the behavior of terrorists often responds primarily to local politics, despite some of the antics that may be staged to win media attention. Most important, terrorism has long flourished in the absence of mass media. The medieval Assassins thrived and struck fear in the hearts of government officials when news of their actions was spread mostly by word of mouth.<sup>18</sup>

If the coverage of terrorism is done properly, it could be used contrary to the wishes of the terrorists. Terrorist violence should be reported in a fashion that would influence public opinion. If the cruel and gruesome facts surrounding terrorism were displayed by the media, and we refused to dwell on the theatrical drama produced by the terrorists, the viewing

audience would see terrorism for what it really is. The fact that terrorists murder innocent victims will be first in our minds. This would cause the public to rally in support of a united posture against terrorism.<sup>19</sup> If the press were to adopt this pattern of reporting, they would provide the public with valuable news, and support the authorities with their attempts to control terrorism.

Laurence Zuckerman, associate editor of the "Review," expressed his thoughts on the matter by stressing, here in the U. S., the sad truth is that if the visible drama of terrorist attacks is not displayed, and that if we do not constantly see anti-American demonstrations taking place, "America will never be made to feel it is being 'held hostage.'" Also, general information about the various terrorist groups who hold hostages would be unknown to the American public.<sup>20</sup> Fellow journalist Lawrence K. Grossman had this to say in support of increasing news coverage of terrorism:

In hostage situations, when millions get to see and, to some extent, know individual victims, the pressure to free the captives intensifies. The more the people know, the more the authorities feel impelled to act if only to overcome the appearance of impotence ... Television coverage of a terrorist attack does tend to escalate the crisis. It can impel a frustrated government to act rather than appear weak and temporizing before millions of viewers. Or it can lead to paralysis out of fear that the whole world is watching. By the same token, the authorities themselves are not without major resources in using television's coverage of terrorist outrages to mobilize public opinion. Witness the Reagan administration's campaign against Moammar Khadafy after the Rome and Vienna airport attacks.<sup>21</sup>

He seems to be stating, depending on who is doing the talking, media coverage can either be labelled a helpful commodity or a hindrance

Gayle Rivers agrees with the sentiments of the above-mentioned journalists. The media can be of great help when an outrage such as terrorism takes place, as long as the coverage is not one-sided. Rivers would like to see more information being reported on the backgrounds of terrorist groups and their ties with the governments who sponsor them. Reports on how and where they are trained, and what types of violence is being used by specific groups would prove useful. Documentaries could be aired which "portray the terrorist for what he really is, not a hero but a fanatic who has made violence an end in itself." By reporting the terrorists' outrages instead of dramatizing them, the public will become knowledgeable of the terrorist war that it is presently unaware of.<sup>22</sup>

In his excellent book, Terrorism, the Media and the Law, Abraham H. Miller provides us with a news editor's perspective of the reporting of terrorism by the media. He stated, news people have to be sensitive to not becoming a part of the story. He said, "Acts of terrorism should be covered consistently and completely as legitimate news events."<sup>23</sup>

Common sense and sound judgement should be the guidelines for coverage of a terrorist event, and protection of human life should be the highest goal. He mentioned, "Terrorism is news, it is different, dramatic, and potentially violent. It is politically noteworthy and of concern to the public."<sup>24</sup> An increase in coverage would hinder the terrorists, not help them as long as the police and journalists communicated and worked together.<sup>25</sup>

Jeffrey Rubin, professor of psychology at Tufts University, and Nehemia Friedland of Tel Aviv University echo the concerns of the others in this section. Their angle is based on the psychological implications which

may occur if media coverage of terrorist violence is denied. They say censorship of terrorism presents various problems. If terrorists are not provided with "their" air time, they may escalate their efforts of violence and bloodshed to a level where the world press could no longer ignore them. To gain audience attention they contended, "If a letter bomb or a school bus hijacking won't get into the press, how about a massive program to poison a city's water supply?"<sup>26</sup> These comments must be taken seriously, for the world is getting used to the more minor acts of terrorism and therefore, is causing our threshold of tolerance to be increased. Instead of only threatening the lives of hostages, terrorists are now selecting individuals from the crowd and murdering them. U.S. Navy's Robert Stethem, during the hijacking episode of TWA flight 847, was one such casualty; another was Mr. Leon Klinghoffer, a crippled civilian aboard the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro.

Other vicious attacks include: The slaying of passengers in the Rome and Vienna airports, the car bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in 1983 in Lebanon, and the placing of bombs on passenger aircraft which are designed to explode while the plane is in flight.

The next category, "Censorship of the Media," presents opposite views of those mentioned on the preceding pages.

#### Censorship of the Media

This section opens with a discussion of an article written by M. L. Stein. In his selection, "Covering Terrorism Abroad," Stein supports the call for the scaled down reporting of terrorist acts. He wrote of a Peruvian

journalist whose country was being devastated by terrorism. The journalist was Alejandro Miro Quesada, Jr. Quesada has been pleading for a more balanced reporting of terrorism because terrorism not only uses the press, but is the path of destruction for freedom of the press. He conceded, "Terrorist acts are still news," but stressed, "By informing we complete, with a golden clasp, the circulation of terrorism." The media's job in a democratic society is to pass on news to the world. But that is exactly what terrorists seek. In free societies, terrorists exploit the press and have them spread their propaganda. In doing so, they aid in instilling fear.

Mr. Quesada supports reporting on the events which are news, but without publicizing the terrorists. He hopes the press will devote less space to terrorists, and avoid using "terrorist jargon," which seems to legitimize the existence of terrorism.<sup>27</sup>

Terrorists are much more successful where there is a free press because the free press will give terrorists the publicity they seek to justify their actions. In countries where there is censorship of the press, acts of terrorism are far and few between. Places like the Soviet Union enjoy a comfortable position with respect to this topic because they can support terrorist activities and export it, and also control acts of terrorism against their country because the Soviet news agencies will not give coverage to violent actions aimed at their motherland.<sup>28</sup>

Here is an example supporting censorship of the media with its results. A "suicide war" was waged against the Israelis in Lebanon in 1985 but the world's knowledge of specific events was very limited. The Israeli government limited news of the attacks and kept reporters away from the areas where the attacks occurred. The result was a dramatic decline

in "suicide attacks." According to a senior Israeli official:

If someone mounts a suicide operation and there is no story about it in the West, then it is as though it never happened, no matter how much damage it does... You don't do terrorism to kill people. You do it to create an echo that makes you larger than life. No echo, no success.<sup>29</sup>

Lord Chalfont, an expert on terrorism, realizes the success of terrorism largely depends on the extent of news coverage provided by the press. Television coverage is especially vital to the terrorist's cause because it shows, in detail, the actions that were creatively staged solely for the television audience. Oddly enough, viewers are attracted by the type of action-packed drama and suspense that is provided by terrorist violence. Through this zest for action, the audience is also being subjected to the terrorists' message and the phenomenon of terror which is, after all, the main objective of all terrorist organizations. If the world becomes terrorized, the terrorists have succeeded. They will then be viewed as a credible force which must be reckoned with.

For this reason, Chalfont believes, "Television has a clear duty not to send that message." He does not suggest violent acts should be ignored and go unreported, instead, he would like to see terrorism covered in a manner which would not "maximize the impact of those acts and coerce governments and people into concession and surrender."<sup>30</sup> Others urge

Mandatory restraints must be implemented because the free press, in its zeal to be first on scene, first to interview hijackers, first to score in the ratings, has failed to exercise self-restraint in the reporting and handling of terrorist attacks.<sup>31</sup>

If adopted, this argument may help deter acts of terrorism but it will

also be in direct violation of a right guaranteed by our First Amendment. Many people say the right to life is more important than the absolute right of freedom of speech.

Proponents of controlling media coverage do not want terrorist violence and hostage situations to be broadcasted by the media. If they are to be broadcasted, then only minor details should be given. The media will succumb to any demands made by hostage takers, and will aid in sensationalizing the event in order to boost their audience ratings. This type of action on the part of the press does not help the authorities in their efforts to counter the terrorists' moves. Another problem with present-day reporting trends is that copy-cat criminals learn the latest hostage intervention techniques from television. Television coverage breeds imitators. They also contend that, "newspapers are guilty of the same shoddy practices as television... but, television is more powerful than print. Criminals don't read--they look at pictures."<sup>32</sup>

This section introduced a sampling of views dealing with the topic of censorship of the media during terrorist and hostage situations. Professionals from the fields of terrorism, psychology, and the media were represented. Once again we have witnessed their reasons with varying measures and degrees of intervention. Regardless of our future actions, the sad thing to remember is that the terrorists are the ones with the least to lose. We must change our habits, or adopt new measures. We could do nothing but then we would be subjected to more of the same violence the terrorists attack us with now. We are being forced to suffer, not the terrorist organizations.

### Terrorist Manipulation of the Press

Are the journalists of the free world being used and manipulated by terrorists? If so, can we, and should we, do anything to stop it?

Terrorism is theater. Too small or too weak to obtain a military victory, terrorists are forced to use violence rhetorically... the terrorist act by itself is nothing, whereas publicity is all... The real danger facing the terrorists is that of being ignored. Terrorists, newspeople, and media experts share the assumption that those whose names make the headlines have power, that getting one's name on the front page is a major political achievement.' Modern terrorists seek access to the media by committing acts that closely fit news agencies definition(s) of news: being timely and unique, involving adventure or having entertainment value, and somehow affecting the lives of those being of them.<sup>33</sup>

J. B. Bell has listed three requirements for what he calls the "terrorist spectacular." "First, the event must be staged in an ideologically satisfactory locale with more than adequate technological facilities. Second, the terrorist drama must offer the reality or prospect of violence. The third component... is movement--the change of scenery that allows the cameras to follow the actors from one site to the next--coupled with the passage of time."<sup>34</sup>

Terrorists who provide these ingredients will have no difficulty in receiving extensive media coverage because the script was written solely for television. The media cannot ignore the event, it has everything it needs to be newsworthy. Besides, with competition as stiff as it is, the agency who decides not to report the story will suffer the consequences when the ratings come out. For television networks, ratings mean money. Instead of journalists simply covering the news, they are coerced into passing on



propaganda that was fashioned especially for them and their cameras<sup>35</sup> It seems as though the news media is caught up in a nasty web which was cleverly woven by terrorists. The press is damned if they report these stories, and is doomed if they do not report them. One could say the media itself is somewhat being held hostage

"Television, whether we like it or not," says Chalfont, "is the means by which the great mass of people throughout the world gain their impressions of national and international events." The T.V. was designed to transmit pictures and terrorism provides exciting action-packed pictures which can take and hold the audience on the edge of their seats. Because so many people today rely on the television for both news and entertainment, it is necessary to guard against the unauthorized use of the air waves. "The danger posed by those who control and manipulate this powerful but simplistic medium is especially significant in their treatment of violence and terrorism"<sup>36</sup>

Manipulation of the press can occur in many different ways. Professor of Journalism at the University of Maryland, L. John Martin cites two such examples in his paper entitled: "The Media's Role in International Terrorism."

The Red Brigades picked Wednesdays and Saturdays as 'their preferred communication days' to get into the thicker Thursday and Sunday newspapers." Another example was expressed by a PLO member. He said, "We recognize that sport is the modern religion of the Western World. We knew that the people of England and America would switch their television sets from any program about the plight of the Palestinians if there was a sporting event on another channel. So we decided to use their Olympics. to make the world pay attention to us. We offered up human sacrifices to your gods of sport and television." (Referring

to the murder of Israeli athletes during the Olympic Games held in Munich. Terrorists prefer to operate in western Europe because the publicity they can receive is greater than anywhere else except in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Controlling the press can be a powerful weapon if it is used in such a way as suggested above. Clearly, Martin's examples have demonstrated the forceful effects of press manipulation. The term, 'spin control' is used in relationship to the ability to shape the way the media covers a story. This 'slanting' of a story or issues is a sought after technique attempted by all public officials. Even President Reagan has not attained the widespread success in this effort as have many terrorist groups. "The Shiite terrorists who hijacked TWA flight 847 have achieved spin control beyond the wildest dreams of any politician."

During this escapade, the terrorists were able to control the news media and keep them at their beck and call. This hijacking provided all the ingredients spelled out by J. E. Bell as necessary to achieve his "terrorist spectacular." Indeed it did! By reporting these spectaculars, the media has a lot to gain. Terrorist events breed fierce competition between the various news agencies. The correspondent who uncovers a breaking story wins valuable ratings points for his agency. Another factor is the potential news media scandal that is at stake for some correspondents. One can recall the sudden fame of ABC's Ted Koppel in the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979-80.<sup>28</sup>

Another member of the ABC team who is becoming famous due to the antics of terrorism is correspondent Charles Glass. Glass is the one who managed to gain an exclusive interview with the hijackers of the TWA flight 847 episode. More recently, Glass himself was kidnapped by twelve gunmen in Lebanon. His fate at this point is still unknown but as expected, his

captors are generating a lot of attention in the media. This time, the media is literally being held hostage.

Zonah Alexander believes whether willingly or not, the media does become a tool which helps terrorism achieve its goals. Because of the extensive coverage provided by television, radio, and the print media, the press passes on the terrorists' propagandizing messages. Due to the world-wide audience listening to these messages, terrorists can attain one or both of the following purposes. First, terrorists seek to strengthen their effectiveness by using violence to terrorize large target groups. In doing so, they hope to alter that group's values and norms, then ultimately, their political structure or form of government. The second purpose is, to forcefully draw world attention so as to gain support for promoting the particular causes the terrorists are "fighting" for.<sup>39</sup>

In a quote from the, "Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla," written by world famous terrorist, Carlos Marighella, he stresses the value of using mass communication to spread terrorist propaganda:

The coordination of urban guerrilla action, including each armed action, is the principal way of making armed propaganda. These actions, carried out with specific and determined objectives, inevitably become propaganda material for the mass communications system.

Bank assaults, ambushes, desertions and diverting of arms, the rescue of prisoners, executions, kidnappings, sabotage, terrorism, and the war of nerves, are all cases in point.

Airplanes diverted in flight by revolutionary action, moving ships and trains assaulted and seized by guerrillas, can also be solely for propaganda effects.<sup>40</sup>

It is spelled out quite clearly here that terrorists will use ruthless

and violent actions to make themselves heard. The vehicle they have chosen to transport their message is mass communication. The mass media, especially in the free world, are professionals in mass communication and are willing to provide the necessary coverage for the terrorists. After all, reporting news is their business.

Because of this dilemma, a news director in Cleveland, Ohio explained, "We feel the coverage we give such incidents is partly to blame, for we are glorifying lawbreakers, we are making heroes out of non-heroes. In effect, we are losing control over our news departments. We are being used."<sup>41</sup> Many other journalists feel the same thing is true, but point out they are caught in the middle of the ordeal. The public has the right to be informed of newsworthy information, regardless of its content, and the task of a journalist is to report that news.

George Will put it this way, "We all know we're being used by terrible people for terrible purposes. The problem, however, is not to make it unnecessarily, optionally obsessive on our part." Will was suggesting that, yes, the press must continue to do their job, but should practice restraint in the process. On occasion, a major scoop may have to be ignored. One of the worst things that can happen is to allow the terrorists to have "spin control" of the media.<sup>42</sup>

Aside from the fact that terrorists are able to transmit their messages at will and instill fear across the globe by using the high-speed press, are there other repercussions as a result of direct media access? Some believe that excessive media coverage of terrorist activities increases the likelihood of future acts of terrorism.

### Encouraging Future Acts of Terrorism

Brian M. Jenkins is the Rand Corporation's expert on terrorism. He posed the question, "By giving incidents of terrorism enormous coverage, does the news media encourage acts of terrorism?" His study tells us that the American public believes it does by a margin of 64 percent to 27 percent in one poll. The available research data suggests that heavy media coverage of all types of terrorist attacks "increases the likelihood that similar incidents will occur in the period immediately following." The Rand Corporation conducted a study on embassy seizures. They found that they occurred in clusters, thus supporting the notion that a contagious effect does take place. The same findings were true for airline hijackings, especially after one was successful and well-publicized. Jenkins went on to say that captured terrorists have confessed that they got their idea to carry out their attacks after first getting the idea from the press coverage of a previous event.<sup>43</sup>

The press is being blamed for the exportation of violent "how-to" techniques, which not only teach others how to engage in the art of terror, but "often triggers similar extreme actions by other individuals and groups." Even psychiatrists agree that when publicity is given to such acts, "it is stimulating to the unstable." Terrorism provides frustrated groups with what they see as a step towards bringing an end to their particular "unfavorable" situation.<sup>44</sup>

This contagious effect can be recalled from a number of past experiences. The Tylenol and Excedrin capsule scandals are prime examples. Others include the increase in Halloween candy tampering across the

nation, and the D. B. Cooper episode. Cooper was the person who collected ransom money, hijacked a plane, and escaped by jumping out of the plane with a parachute. He was actually the sixth person to attempt that very same crime. Some years ago a television movie depicted a prison break using a helicopter. In the Fall of 1986, a man hijacked a helicopter, landed it in the prison yard in Pleasanton, California and successfully broke out his inmate girlfriend.

Many of the aircraft hijackings that occur follow the same basic guidelines. The kidnappings and assassination attempts around the world seem to include similar tactics, too: a diplomat travels in his car on his way to work, he is cut off in traffic by a pack of gunmen and kidnapped--as was the case with ABC's Charles Glass, or the gunmen ambush the individual while still in his vehicle. The list of violence that was spurred on by previous perpetrators is an endless one. The point has been made.

We can augment this contention by introducing the views of psychiatrist Dr. Frederick J. Hacker of the Hacker Clinic in Los Angeles:

Print and electronic media eagerly lap up the sensational fare provided by terrorism as prime-time entertainment. Packaging dramatic stimulation as news has the additional titillation value of being real and authentic. Research amply demonstrates that particularly the 'showification' of terrorist acts, the simultaneous reporting of ongoing terroristic events, influences their outcome in at least two ways: 1. to make a short, violent 'solution' more likely, and 2. to increase the likelihood of copycat repetitions and imitations of violence regardless of whether this violence is employed by terrorists or the representatives of law and order.<sup>45</sup>

Viewing violence on television has never been healthy for anyone. The images portrayed on many common television shows are damaging

When live coverage of terrorist situations is broadcasted again and again by the media, what is seen is not fiction. These tragedies are actually happening to real victims who suffer and bleed.

It is important to note that even the President of ABC News, Lawrence K. Grossman, agrees that television is allowing itself to be "used" by the terrorists and that television does encourage terrorist acts. Terrorists are able to control the press by setting the stage and writing the script. They do an excellent job of it, too. Grossman quoted Jenkins who said, "Terrorists want a lot of people watching and listening, not a lot of people dead." He also stresses that television does enhance the copycat syndrome of terrorism. He stated, "News travels instantaneously from one end of the world to the other. One highly visible action inspires others elsewhere."<sup>46</sup>

Many of the experts in each of the concerned disciplines share the same feeling, the broadcasting of terrorism encourages future acts of terrorism. Then, what often happens once the world has had its fill of a particular type of terrorist act, is similar acts begin to lose their "appeal." The world audience has seen it all before, the uniqueness has had a chance to wear off. We then accept the attitude, "Oh well, another damn hijacking." The terrorists must now come up with another plan to regain their once captive audience. This time they must blow up an infant, then throw its remains onto the runway in front of the media so the entire world can once again become appalled at the violent act. When these terrorists receive the coverage they want, other groups realize that they too must escalate their actions to compete and gain the attention they require to make their causes known.

### Extent of News Coverage

"Walter Lippmann noted, 'The function of news is to signalize an event, the function is to bring to light hidden facts, to set them into relation with each other and make a picture of reality on which men can act.' The object of a journalist's professional pride is the story; the coverage of single events."<sup>47</sup> This passage seems ideal for a bronze plaque hanging on the wall of a young reporter who recently graduated from college. It will motivate him to dig long and deep for the accurate story. The theme of this section is, just how long and how deep will the journalist be willing to go in pursuit of the coveted story? Are ethics and moral values weighed by the journalist? Do any factors enter the mind of a journalist aside from simply getting the story? Does the press have any moral obligations to uphold, or is getting the story the sole concern of the journalist? How much news is appropriate and how much is too much?

One of the amazing things about terrorism, as Jenkins points out, is the amount of media coverage it receives. When an act of terrorism occurs, the press grabs hold of it and refuses to let it go. It actually crowds out all other news. Why does this happen? Is it in the public's best interest? It seems apparent we have a right to be informed, but informed is one thing, bombarded is another.

"When Aldo Moro was kidnapped, the story eliminated all other news items from the front pages of Italian newspapers." We all remember the coverage awarded to "America Held Hostage" when, for 444 days, fifty Americans were held hostage in Iran. Maybe the public just thrives on the type of "excavating" done by the press when it comes to the coverage of



dramatic violence and sorrow. The following information put together by Jenkins provides an accurate perspective of the magnitude

Measured against the world volume of violence, the amount of terrorist violence is trivial. Ordinary crime claims far more victims. Even in Israel, where 272 persons died in terrorist incidents between 1967 and 1978, nearly a thousand people were murdered during the same period. The contrast is truly striking, however, in the United States where terrorist violence caused fewer than 80 deaths between 1970 and 1978 but nearly 20,000 murders were committed annually. Worldwide, several thousands have died in international terrorist incidents--upwards of ten thousand if the casualties of purely domestic violence in Northern Ireland, Spain, Argentina, and Turkey are included. During this same period, several millions died in wars. Yet it is the terrorists who often dominate the headlines of our era.

It makes no difference that ordinary homicides vastly exceed murders caused by terrorists. The news media do not allocate space or air time proportionally according to the leading causes of death in the world. News in general is about the unusual, the alarming, the dramatic. It is not a summing up of information. It is anecdotal. Because of their frequency, ordinary murders are, regrettably, just that--ordinary.

It has been asserted that the news media report only the sensational aspects of terrorism, the blood, the gore, the horror of the victims. As in war, the media, and in particular television, focus on the action and in doing so often present an unbalanced picture of the intensity of the conflict.<sup>48</sup>

The thing that upsets James M. Wall is not the fact that the press covers terrorism, terrorism is news and therefore, deserves to be made public. Wall disagrees with the manner in which the news media goes about passing on that news. Much of the information provided is only "context-free" filler designed to prolong a particular episode in order to sustain audience interest. Instead of good solid news, which at times may

be provided throughout a crisis, the press creates situations through their interviews and speculations. The extent of reporting seems to cross over from newsworthy information to mere novelty items. Journalists should report the news, and refrain from interpreting it. He expressed another journalist's views on the matter: "The networks punched 'up the ever-ready posse of former government officials and tweedy academicians who will tell us, in a matter of minutes, what a bomb on a TWA jetliner thousands of miles away means. Probably. Maybe. More than likely.'"<sup>49</sup>

Of course, news is news. But the constant rambling on, and rehashing of an incident serves no purpose except to satisfy the networks' desire to do, as the terrorists themselves do, reach out and hold an audience. To what extent should the press go? How much is enough? Gayle Rivers accepts the fact that it is the journalist's job to seek out and report the news, but quickly points out that it is not the role of the press to manufacture the news. Are there circumstances where a reporter is a responsible citizen first, and a journalist second?<sup>50</sup> Rivers believes there are, but that is only one opinion, and not necessarily the feelings of the press corps member who has to make a living by getting a story, or by seeking to uncover a different angle than the other reporters.

When television newscasters are confronted, they contend that they "cannot not" report.<sup>51</sup> Or answer, "If I don't report it, someone else will." And further still, "It's my job to be inquisitive and report the news, if I fail short, I'll be out of a job." Each of these statements is true. If a change is to be made dealing with the extent of news coverage to be provided, the effort must come from higher up in the news organizations. The agency presidents and editors are responsible for creating the standards for their

individual companies. Competition is an all important reality in the news industry. Generally, this competition is the driving force behind the extent of media coverage afforded to a particular issue.

### Psychological Effects of Viewing Terror-Related Violence

When we watch our television sets and view excessive violence and the suffering it causes, what effect does it have on our psyche? What happens when we realize that the terrorist attacks presented on the local newscasts are not something "staged" in Hollywood, but are instead, actual occurrences? Are we stimulated or appalled? Psychoanalyst Dr. Erika Freeman has addressed the subject and said, "The sparks jump. The criminal mind is most receptive to these kinds of stories... and what is worse, is the copycat criminals learn the latest hostage intervention techniques from TV. Every move is revealed to them before they begin their own escapades."

She also worries about the young people watching. They may view the notoriety earned by terrorists as something they themselves can achieve if they attempt similar acts.<sup>52</sup> When an act of terror is committed, all attention is on the perpetrator. The perpetrator, they discover, can make demands and hold entire cities at bay. Most people would love to be a celebrity, to reach that plateau, there are those who may decide to resort to the use of terrorism. After all, they have seen it work before in living color.

Another expert on human minds, Dr. Hacker, reports

Terrorist actions have a seductive appeal to predisposed individuals with a character structure and personality organization similar to

that of the terrorists.. as long as terrorism is rewarded by the virtual certainty of widespread publicity, the expectation of such terroristic 'success' will remain an important motivation for future terroristic acts<sup>53</sup>

Dr. Hacker's assumption seems credible. People do learn from observing others. What better tool than television can provide the step-by-step details of the how-to's of terrorism, and then after the fact, publicize the event to the four corners of the globe?

Pictures are often much stronger than words. The viewing of a horrible act will stick out in one's mind more vividly than the same act portrayed in print. Seeing results is easier to comprehend than only reading about them in newspapers. Humans will copy or repeat the actions of others. They can also get ideas on how to expound on a previous violent act by "clicking" on their favorite newscaster for an update on the latest in criminal activity.

While most experts agree with the above statements, others have problems proving them. One such man is Professor Jonathan Freeman of the University of Toronto. He recognizes the almost unanimous agreement that "viewing violence on television increases the chances of similar acts being carried out by others." He points out that there has not been any comprehensive research conducted in this area, and that the available literature does not support the hypothesis. He mentions the theory is a possible and interesting one, but until the research is undertaken, he cannot support the masses in their contentions.<sup>54</sup>

In the final section of this chapter the controversies surrounding responsible journalism are discussed. The specific role of the journalist is addressed by Grossman and others. The reader will also discover what

being responsible means and whether journalists are committed to this issue.

### Responsible Journalism

A gentleman by the name of David Jacobsen was held hostage in Lebanon for 17 months. Upon his release last fall, he met with President Reagan at the White House. He accompanied the President and appeared before the press corps. After a volley of probing questions was unleashed by the press, Jacobsen became upset and "made an emotional appeal to the journalists. 'Please, unreasonable speculation can endanger the lives of the Americans still held in Lebanon, so in the name of God, would you please just be responsible, and back off.'"<sup>55</sup>

When individual lives are in danger, how much coverage and speculation on the part of the media is enough, and how much is too much? Where should the line be drawn? Reporters are professionals in the art of investigating stories in a competitive environment. Often the difference between responsible and irresponsible journalism becomes difficult to distinguish, especially when the pressure is on to put together a winning story.

It has been said by many experts, journalists included, that the following "scoop" is a perfect example of irresponsible reporting. NBC is the network in question. NBC representatives in Europe secretly arranged an interview with one of the world's most wanted terrorists. He is a Palestinian named Abul Abbas. Abbas is responsible for the attack on the Achille Lauro. Abbas, a known terrorist, famous only for "kidnapping and

Abbas was catered to and interviewed live on television by NBC. In return, NBC agreed not to disclose the whereabouts of Abbas. The interview told us what we did not already know, "Americans are fair targets for terrorist attacks and President Reagan was the terrorist's no 1 target." Due to the fact that interviewing a known terrorist before anyone else, NBC let the network be used as an accomplice of sorts of terrorism.<sup>56</sup> Did NBC get caught up in the excitement and overlook their responsibility? Many will answer yes.

Lawrence H. Grossman explains what he feels should be the role of the journalists:

Television journalists have the responsibility to serve as credible observers and reporters, not as negotiators or direct participants. Any reporter who takes on the role of negotiator or of middleman forfeits his role as a reporter. When he becomes a player, he is no longer an observer. Television's role is to cover what is happening and not try to change the event or influence the participants. It is television's job to provide calm, rational, accurate reports, to defuse hysteria, rumor and speculation... Television's job is not to propagandize, it is to report the facts and assure the credibility of its journalism.<sup>57</sup>

The Abbas interview certainly violated most of Grossman's comments. The ironic thing to keep in mind is Grossman is the President of NBC News. Somewhere along the way, communication at NBC must have broken down. Even his subordinates can overstep their bounds and dabble in a little irresponsibility.

Former Press Secretary for President Carter, Jody Powell, accuses media competition for most of journalism's irresponsibility and excessiveness. More specifically, he blames, "competition for ratings and circulation between newspapers and networks and for personal

advancement within a given news organization."<sup>58</sup>

A professor from Duke University, James David Barber, explains the media's role as a difficult one. He writes to the press, "Your responsibility is to make reality interesting. What you write has to be real, and it has to be made interesting. Your literary task requires you to engage the attention of an audience that has many other things on its mind."<sup>59</sup> This statement, although meant as a positive stroke, may give us insight into the reasons why the media report news the way they do.

To gain the attention of a diverse audience it would appear that journalists feel they must color or slant a story. If they must, and the audience goal is reached, the particular news agency will benefit and those at the office or station will be content. But what about the public? This is the same public who has the Constitutional right to receive information from a free press. Does that free press also have the right to bend, alter, or change the news? Accurate reporting of events is what should be taking place. Terrorists thrive on the added attention they receive from the enthusiastic press of the free world.

It has been declared, "There is no formula available to help journalists decide how to cover 'each highly emotional, terrifying and unpredictable terrorism episode'." Professionalism, good judgement and common sense are the keys to covering terrorism, not imposing guidelines. If controlling guidelines were established to police the media during such episodes, the eventual result would be a public who could no longer trust the journalists. Some believe regardless of the world terrorist situation, the best policy is to keep the people informed.<sup>60</sup> Others totally disagree, and still another contingent seeks to reach a compromise between the two.

## Footnotes

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<sup>4</sup> Abraham H. Miller, ed., Terrorism: The Media and the Law (Dobbs Ferry: Transnational, 1982), 37.

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<sup>7</sup> Miller, 43.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, 72.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence F. Grossman, "Television and Terrorism: A Common Sense Approach," Terrorism, Violence, and Insurgency Journal 6, no. 4 (1986): 2.

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<sup>12</sup> Patrick Clawson, "Why We Need More But Better Coverage of Terrorism," Orbis 30, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 701.



<sup>13</sup> Clawson, 702

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<sup>16</sup> "Growing Controversy Over US-Iran Reporting," Broadcasting 3, no. 20 (17 November 1986): 72.

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<sup>18</sup> Clawson, 703

<sup>19</sup> Clawson, 703

<sup>20</sup> Laurence Zuckerman, "The Dilemma of the Forgotten Hostages," Columbia Journalism Review 25, no. 2 (July/August 1986): 34

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<sup>27</sup> M. L. Stein, "Covering Terrorism Abroad," Editor and Publisher 119, no. 40 (4 October 1986): 28 & 44

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<sup>30</sup> Lord Chalfont, "Terrorism, Television, and Philosophic Doubt," Terrorism, an International Journal 9, no. 3 (1987): 304.

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<sup>32</sup> George Rodman, ed., Mass Media Issues, 2nd ed. (New York: Science Research Associates, 1984), 291.

<sup>33</sup> Dowling, 13-4.

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<sup>37</sup> L. John Martin, "The Media's Role in International Terrorism," Terrorism, an International Journal 8, no. 2 (1985): 135.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander, 49.

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<sup>43</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, The Psychological Implications of Media-Covered Terrorism (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 1981), 6-7.

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CHAPTER III

**Specific Instances Where the Media Helped or Hindered  
Terrorist/Hostage Situations**

In Chapters One and Two, some of the many issues and controversies dealing with terrorism and the media were introduced and discussed. Presented were the opinions and points of view expressed by a sampling of the leading experts in disciplines relating to the subject at hand. The pros and cons of this topic were clearly defined, as were the seemingly never ending arguments. The content of Chapter Three is a bit different. It is comprised of brief descriptions of actual terrorist/hostage situations which were either helped or hindered by the actions of media personnel. This information is given to provide a perspective of reality to the reader, as opposed to the more abstract or theoretical approaches displayed in the previous chapters.

The first episode to be introduced occurred in 1979-1980. Armed Iranians attacked the United States Embassy in Teheran protesting the assistance given to the deposed Shah of Iran by our government. All Americans were taken at gunpoint, tied-up and blindfolded. They became hostages and remained so for 444 grueling days. During this incident the press was commended for their holding back of a major story, a story which, if reported, could have endangered the lives of six more Americans.

When the U. S. Embassy was taken over, six Americans managed to make their way to the Canadian Embassy. There they were hidden by Canadian officials until the Canadians could arrange for their escape out of the country. While the Americans were hiding out, the press was aware of the situation and decided not to report the story. They understood the potential dangers involved with making their information public. The news media released the story only after the six individuals were safely out of Iran. The press, in this situation, acted with great restraint and responsibility. Because of their decision not to report, they assisted in the successful escape of the Americans.<sup>1</sup>

The next example of the media playing a helpful role was, as strange as it may seem, taken from an article written by Yonah Alexander. Here, the media used their talents to provide a "vital link between authorities and the public-at-large in connection with the May-June 1977 South Moluccan incident in Holland." During terrorist or hostage incidents, the media may report potential harmful information in their competing for a story with other agencies. In this example, the media was careful not to release vital strategic and tactical information that could have endangered the lives of those involved. The media selectively reported the news which satisfied the public's appetite and, more importantly, were looked upon as a responsible and credible body in the arena of crisis management.<sup>2</sup>

In both the above incidents, the particular news agencies decided to impose stricter guidelines on themselves. Whether the decision was a self-imposed blackout or a careful screening of the story, the media proved they indeed can be effective in helping to control terrorism. The key here though is "self." The media does not want outside forces to interfere with

their reporting, they totally disagree with any type of governmental censorship guidelines. They themselves will choose as just demonstrated, when and if they believe it is their responsibility to change their reporting procedures.

The examples which will be discussed next do not portray the media in a positive light. Not only did the media elect not to limit their coverage of hostile terrorist/hostage situations, on the contrary, they exposed any new angle to the stories that seemed interesting and action-packed. On some occasions, media speculation and hype increased the danger level involved in the incidents, and on other occasions fatalities, not breaking stories, were the result of the media's efforts. In these types of situations, the law enforcement representatives are voicing their opinions the loudest. They argue that the media hinder rescue attempts and jeopardize the lives of both hostages and responding forces.

One such event took place in October 1977 as a Lufthansa jet was hijacked to Mogadishu, Somalia. The aircrew obeyed the instructions of the hijackers, but then the German Captain of the airliner devised a brilliant plan to provide valuable intelligence information to the authorities. The Captain had secretly passed on this information over his radio during normal transmissions to the control tower. The special West German counter-terrorist force, GSG-9, was going to use this information when they deployed upon the aircraft to free the hostages. Before the assault, the hijackers aboard the jet heard media broadcasts over their radios which revealed the actions of the Captain. In response, the hijackers then murdered the Captain.<sup>3</sup>

The journalist who made known the efforts of the Captain was simply

doing his job of gathering news and disseminating it. He did not realize he would have caused such a tragedy. If he did not report that story some other journalist would have "benefited" from it and received all the credit. As mentioned earlier in this study, the role of the media is a very competitive one, in which "only the strong will survive." As it turned out, the reporter was credited for breaking the story, but after the smoke cleared, what did he actually gain?

Another episode happened in Washington, D.C., again in 1977, when Hanafi Muslims took over three buildings. A reporter by the name of Charles Fenyvesi was one of the people taken hostage in the B'nai B'rith building. He later stated the following information pertaining to the incident:

The most damaging case concerned the TV reporter who caught sight of a basket, lifted up by rope, to the fifth floor, where, the world later learned, some people evaded the round-up and barricaded themselves in a room. Their presence apparently was not known to the gunmen, who held their prisoners on the eighth floor but patrolled the lower floors until late Wednesday afternoon. The gunmen were probably informed of the TV reporter's scoop by their fellow Hanafis who monitored the news media outside the captured buildings.

Fortunately the gunmen did not break through the door. Another case of a reporter endangering lives occurred when Khaalis was asked, during a live telephone interview with a leading local radio station, 'Have you set a deadline?' The police and all the other experts had thought that the absence of a deadline was one encouraging sign. Fortunately, Khaalis was too engrossed in his rhetoric to pay attention to the question.

A third example, One prominent Washington newscaster called Khaalis a Black Muslim. Khaalis, whose family was murdered by Black Muslims, flew into a rage and stormed into the room where the hostages were held. He declared that he would kill one of us in retaliation for the newsmen's words. The police, meanwhile, advised the newscaster to promptly issue an apology, and Khaalis

was eventually mollified<sup>4</sup>

During the same Hanafi siege, another broadcast crew reported live that they saw the police carrying boxes of ammunition into the building and getting ready for a major assault when, in fact, the police were taking in food for the hostages<sup>5</sup>. The hostage taker, Khaalis, was a heavily armed and emotionally unstable person who was holding dozens of hostages. Khaalis, if listening to either the TV or radio at the precise moment the false message was transmitted, could have easily gone into another rage and actually called off negotiations or, even worse, he might have killed a hostage.

When the media comes on scene with their mini-cams and portable battery packs, they can move in and out of police restricted areas and display to the world the exact positions of police sharpshooters and SWAT forces. These images are not only portrayed to the law-abiding viewing public, but also to the terrorists. In these instances, the media provides the terrorists with valuable tactical information which gives them a decisive advantage over the authorities.

In November 1974, a British Airways plane was hijacked on its way to Libya. The terrorists demanded the release of thirteen terrorists held in an Egyptian jail. The authorities passed on to the hijackers that they would cooperate with them and release the thirteen individuals. A plane was sent from Cairo and it allegedly had the thirteen terrorists on board. When the Egyptian plane landed, an energetic journalist reported there were no freed terrorists on the plane and that the whole plan was to trick the hijackers. The hijackers received word of the helpful broadcast and decided they would not be made fool of. They responded by selecting one passenger from the available hostages, a German banker, and murdered him<sup>6</sup>.



When a reporter was asked if he ever thought his reporting of these types of situations may set off the terrorists, he responded by saying, "I never thought about getting them riled up. My primary goal is to get a scoop. My gratification comes from doing something that is worthy of the front page . . . doing a story worth seeing. Probably, there in the back of my mind there was concern, but I didn't think about it."<sup>7</sup>

Another situation involving the question of the news media's role during a terrorist/hostage incident occurred in Cleveland, Ohio in the late 70's. In this instance, a local television reporter called his news producer and stated he thought the hostage situation was nearing its end. The reporter was right, the crisis was close to being resolved. The producer, hoping to break with the story sent in the "mini-cams" to record some live footage of the incident. The camera crews got pictures of the various police sharp-shooters in position around the occupied building. The person holding the hostages had a TV at his disposal. He saw the snipers and called off the negotiations. The episode continued for another day but luckily, no one was injured.<sup>8</sup>

These are but a few of the documented incidents where the media was suspected to have either helped or hindered terrorist/hostage situations. One important note to mention is the fact that each of the negative episodes discussed took place in the late 70's. The finding of similar information for more recent years is extremely difficult. Is there a reason for this phenomenon? Is the media learning from past mistakes in their reporting of terrorism? Are they becoming more sensitive during hostage and other incident situations? Are they collectively doing a better job of reporting on terrorism? A review of more recent terrorist incidents and the media's

response to them is warranted if we are to discover that a new reporting trend has surfaced

An excellent journal reference source for this information is the Terrorism, Violence, and Insurgency Report. It was formerly entitled, Terrorism, Violence and Insurgency Journal, between the Fall of 1979 and the Summer of 1985. Volume 5, no. 4 is the last publication to include the word "Journal" in the title. The new title, using "Report," began with volume 6, no. 1 and is the title presently being used. The report can be obtained by writing to:

Editor in Chief  
T.V.I. Inc.,  
P.O. Box 1055  
Beverly Hills, Ca, 90213

In the back of each journal there is a section entitled, "TVI Update." This update provides a summary of all world-wide terrorist incidents that occurred in the months prior to the printing of each journal issue. All available issues for the past five years were scanned. Because the media has not recently been blamed directly for hindering, or credited with helping to end many specific terrorist situations, one may surmise one of two theories: one, terrorist activity has decreased during the 1980's. Most things are proportional. If the media has had less opportunity to get involved with terrorism, chances are their effects on it will decrease proportionally. The other theory could be that news agencies are simply doing a better job reporting the news and also keeping themselves from getting involved with the acts of terrorism

The first theory of a decrease in terrorist incidents can be quickly

rejected for there has been a dramatic escalation in terrorism in the 80's. The recent attacks have been more violent and bloody than ever before. Larger groups of victims are being targetted. The world is now witness to suicide bombers and terrorists who not only threaten, but actually carry out their brutal threats. Some of the more publicized acts of terrorism include the Rome and Vienna airport passenger terminal bombings, the rash of exploding bombs in Paris, the Achille Lauro hijacking incident and subsequent murder of crippled American Leon Klinghoffer, and the hijacking of TWA flight 847.<sup>9</sup> Other notable attacks were the bombing of a disco in West Germany, the explosion of an Air India jetliner which caused 329 people to die and plummet into the Atlantic Ocean, the vast kidnappings in Lebanon, and the bombing of a synagogue in Istanbul, Turkey. These incidents are only a fraction of those committed by world-wide terrorists within the past few years.

Theory number two, that the media could be doing a better job of reporting on terrorism than in the past, may then be the answer. Has the media learned from past experiences and altered their reporting techniques? Listed below are the views of the three major networks (ABC, NBC, and CBS) on the subject of covering terrorism.

ABC News has not written formal guidelines. They found it impossible to write guidelines which covered all situations. A spokesman said that the main points ABC producers informally emphasize are to never put anyone's life in danger, to not interfere in the event, and to take a 'back seat and let it happen.' The network says it relies heavily on the experience and judgement of individual correspondents.<sup>10</sup>

NBC News relies on the section in its policy manual covering riots and civil disturbances. That section calls for correspondents and cameramen to act with care not to exacerbate an event and to avoid being used or manipulated by those involved. There is also a caution against sensationalizing the story beyond its already dramatic nature.<sup>11</sup>

CBS News has had broad guidelines for network correspondents since 1977. The guidelines emphasize that there can be no 'specific, self-executing rule' for handling terrorism or hostage stories, but they call for 'thoughtful, conscientious care and restraint' and 'particular care in how we treat the terrorist/kidnapper.' The standards call for the paraphrasing of terrorist demands unless the demands are free of rhetoric and propaganda; no live coverage of the terrorists 'except in the most compelling circumstances,' and only then with the permission of the president of CBS News; restricting telephone calls to the hostages or kidnappers; getting guidance from experts on what kind of reporting may exacerbate the situation; making sure that law enforcement officers have easy access to CBS personnel if they need them, and keeping the story in balance so it does not crowd out other news of the day.

In all cases, network rules do not apply to affiliates, which make their own policy.<sup>12</sup>

Lawrence K. Grossman concludes, "Television has examined itself and questioned itself about its own terrorism coverage.. professionalism, tempered by common sense and good judgement in each case, is the most useful guide to covering such incidents."<sup>13</sup>

If newsmen are adhering to the above mentioned self-imposed guidelines, it is anyone's guess. The indicators do seem to point towards a better, but not perfect, media product when it comes to reporting on terrorist or hostage situations. Brian M. Jenkins stated, "The media will have to experiment with covering terrorist acts in such a fashion as to remain true to their responsibility of reporting the news, while at the same time being extremely sensitive to the consequences of that reporting."<sup>14</sup>

Maybe the news agencies are following Jenkin's suggestion, for there is an apparent change in the atmosphere that once existed in the late 70's

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Patrick Clawson, "Why We Need More But Better Coverage of Terrorism," Orbis 30, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 707.

<sup>2</sup> Yonah Alexander, "Terrorism, the Media and the Police," Police Studies 1, no. 2 (June 1978): 48.

<sup>3</sup> Grant Wardlaw, Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics and Counter-measures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 79.

<sup>4</sup> Wardlaw, 79.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham H. Miller, ed., Terrorism, the Media and the Law (Dobbs Ferry: Transnational, 1982), 26.

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Zuckerman, "The Dilemma of the 'Forgotten Hostages,'" Journal of Journalism Review 25, no. 2 (July/August 1986): 30.

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## CHAPTER IV

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Terrorism has been successfully used in the past. Its useage has dramatically increased over the last two decades, and will probably continue to play a significant role in the future. One of the main reasons groups, or even entire governments, utilize terrorist tactics is because it is an extremely effective and cost efficient means by which they can get their message across and express their views. These people view terrorism as a useful "weapons system"-- a cheap way of waging war. Terrorism offers an alternative to open armed conflict. For many small nations or organizations, the use of terrorism provides them with an equalizer.<sup>1</sup> This equalizer allows them to "compete" on more level ground with much stronger nations or societies.

A handful of people can plan an attack armed with nothing but vengeance and a few homemade bombs, kill unsuspecting people, cause thousands of dollars worth of damage annually, and instill massive fear in the minds of entire societies. Terrorist groups, or any other group of fanatics, can achieve a devastating psychological advantage over the masses with very little money and with minimum risk. Because the authorities have difficulty identifying terrorists and do not know when or where they will strike next, we are usually at a disadvantage-- normally only being able to



react after a violent incident has already occurred

The media, in our democratic nation, exists to bring forth the news, and to keep the public informed of the facts and events as they occur. A more knowledgeable public is one of the major ingredients necessary for a true democracy to flourish. Terrorism is news, and the media cannot be expected to ignore it. Survival of the journalist is also an issue here. If a news agency or specific journalist chooses not to report an act of terrorism because of its potential damaging effects, another agency will! The world of the journalist is a highly competitive one. He who reports and is on top of the news keeps his job. His or her particular news agency will also remain competitive with the other news organizations. Individual newspaper publishers or television networks simply cannot afford not to report this type of action-packed information.

The all important ratings points are what makes or breaks news organizations. The higher the rating a network has will influence the price they can charge advertisers for commercial air time. Networks who make more money enjoy the status and power that goes along with it. With this power comes job security for the network's employees. One can easily see where the competition comes from, it is purely survival.

Yes, we have terrorism, and yes, we have a free press. The major problem here is the way they seem to interact with each other. Due to the fact that Western societies are free, terrorists choose to "play" for our television cameras because they know their messages and violent acts will be publicized. Terrorist attacks provide the action packed drama that will captivate and hold an audience. The media realizes they have no choice but to report action that has been created especially for their cameras. It looks

as though a convenient circle has been created by which both the terrorists and the media benefit. This is the symbiosis that was previously mentioned. As stated, terrorism will continue, but it does not have to be as successful as it has been in the past. Perhaps the manipulation of the press by terrorists can also decrease.

The following recommendations might prove useful in the reporting and controlling of future acts of terrorism.

Since government censorship does not seem to be a very good idea, one of two suggestions may be adopted. First, a professional media organization made up of journalists could be established to set guidelines and standards. This organization would be much like the American Medical Association for the medical profession, or the American Bar Association for attorneys. Journalism, unlike many other professions, does not have a quality control mechanism to assure certain standards are being met by their own personnel. The press has the ability to investigate and report problems in other professions (politics for example), but does not use this ability to provide a vehicle for policing their own activities. The other suggestion is simply to have each news agency set up its own standards and strictly abide by them. Currently, agencies state they already have established standards for the reporting of terrorism, but many seldom seem to follow them. Although news coverage may be better than it was in the late 70's, it still requires improvement.

Another recommendation is to have law enforcement agencies appoint media representatives on each of the forces. These officers should be trained in the areas of communications, press relations, and public relations. It is the responsibility of these "Reps" to maintain contact on a

continuous basis with television, radio, and print journalists. This relationship would provide sound communication between the media and authorities long before an actual crisis takes place. If a crisis does occur, the job of the Rep. is to provide accurate facts to the press so they do not speculate or send in crews that might jeopardize hostages or responding forces. The press, in turn, will respond by cooperating with police and can be viewed as both professional and responsible in that they are reporting valuable and accurate news to the public. The media will hopefully feel obligated to assist the authorities with their duties while the crisis is taking place.<sup>2</sup> Another reason this is a valuable proposal is because the Rep. can also act as a buffer between the press and the on-scene commander, leaving the commander free to concentrate only on the hostage situation without being disturbed with unnecessary interruptions by the press.<sup>3</sup>

In their reporting of hostage/terrorist incidents, the press should only report the news and avoid analyzing, speculating, and interpreting it. They should refrain from using colorful language and catch phrases when referring to terrorism. The glorification of terrorists and their crimes should not be condoned. The press might also wish to become less willing to jump when terrorists call for a live interview, or "press conference."<sup>4</sup>

Often, once is enough. The senseless repetition of a story to keep it alive should also be avoided by journalists. Re-hashing the same information day after day, week after week, does not serve the best interest of the viewing audience. Nor do interviews with the grieving family members of hostages. Live on-scene coverage of violent terrorist incidents is another area that must be addressed. This type of reporting is not necessary and seems to have more negative connotations than positive ones.

Other recommendations include:

- \* Reporters must make an effort to resist becoming participants of terrorist incidents.<sup>5</sup>
- \* During situations, such as kidnappings, temporary withholding of the news may be considered.<sup>6</sup>
- \* The press should portray terrorists for what they really are criminals and murderers. This will help to de-glorify terrorism and place it in its proper perspective.
- \* The news that an act of terrorism has occurred should be told, but giving specific details needs to be avoided. This will help slow down the copy-cat effect that takes place.<sup>7</sup>
- \* Avoid giving tactical information of response forces. This will stop the terrorists from receiving valuable intelligence. It also aids in keeping hostages safe from further terrorist reprisals.
- \* As Mr. Lawrence K. Grossman stresses, "responsible journalism, and a common sense approach" are needed when reporting on terrorism. If we could be assured his suggestions were to be followed by those in the media, the fight against terrorism would be more successful. The spreading of terror would be reduced, as would the physical suffering of terrorist victims.

Of course the press should report newsworthy information, but the issue most often addressed in this research is the extent and manner in which they do so. Terrorist attacks are by themselves news, but excessive coverage and hype over incidents provides the terrorists with precisely what they want, publicity to terrorize and spread their propaganda. The

media should not assist terrorists in furthering their goals

We need to encourage future research in the area of the psychological implications of those viewing terrorist violence on television. This would enable us to study the effect on viewers, and then determine if our current method of reporting terrorism is in the best interest of the American public.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Brian M. Jenkins, "The U.S. Response to Terrorism: A Policy Dilemma," Terrorism, Violence and Insurgency Journal 5 no. 4 (Spring 1985): 32.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen D. Gladis, "The Hostage/Terrorist Situation and the Media," FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin 48, no. 9 (September 1979): 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gladis, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Mortimer B. Zuckerman, "Playing the Terrorist's Game," U.S. News and World Report 100 (9 July 1986): 86.

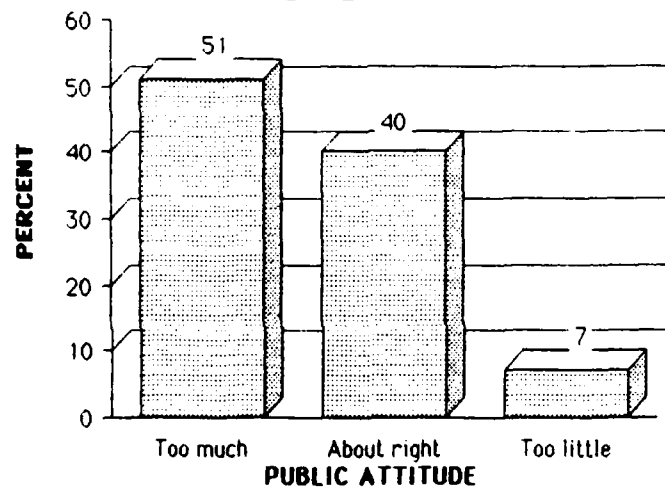
<sup>5</sup> Grant Wardlaw, Political Terrorism: Theory, Tactics and Counter-measures (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Wardlaw, 85.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham H. Miller, Terrorism: The Media and the Law (Dobbs Ferry: Transnational, 1982) 138.

## APPENDIX A

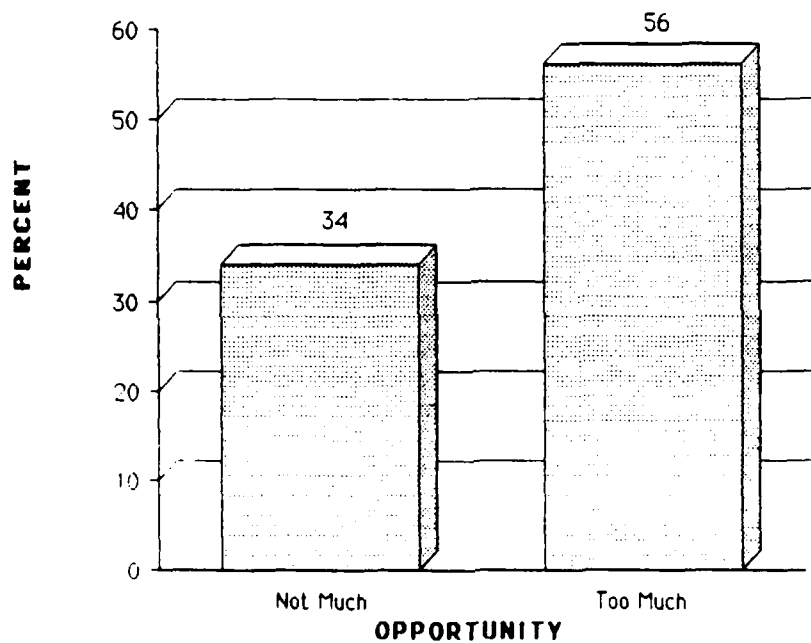
### PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARD PRESS ATTENTION TO TERRORISM



(Note) The figures expressed in each of the graphs were taken from a Gallup study commissioned by the Times Mirror Corporation in September 1986. The publication is entitled, The People & The Press, Part 2. The Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Times Mirror is Robert F. Erburu.

APPENDIX B

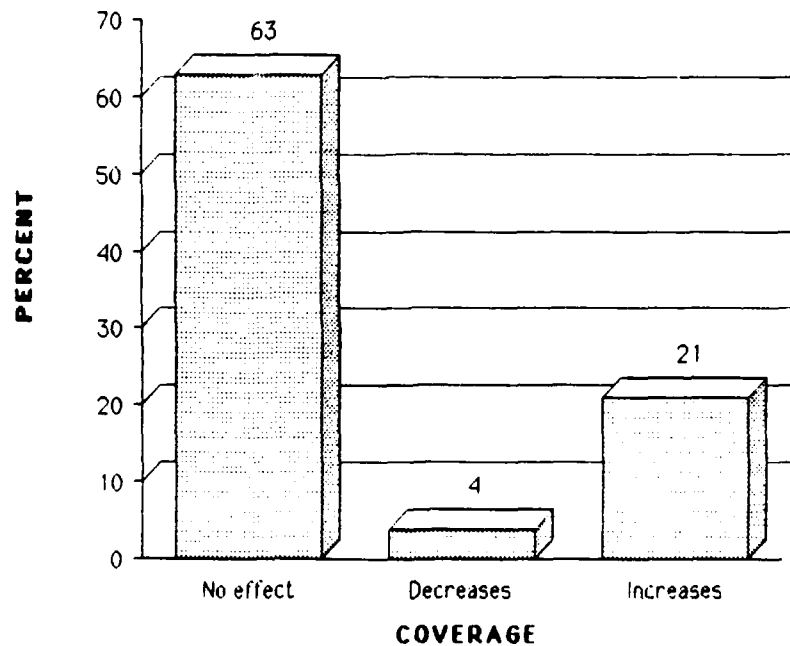
**PERCENT OF PUBLIC WHO THINK PRESS GIVES/DOES NOT GIVE  
TERRORISTS TOO MUCH OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE THEIR CAUSE**





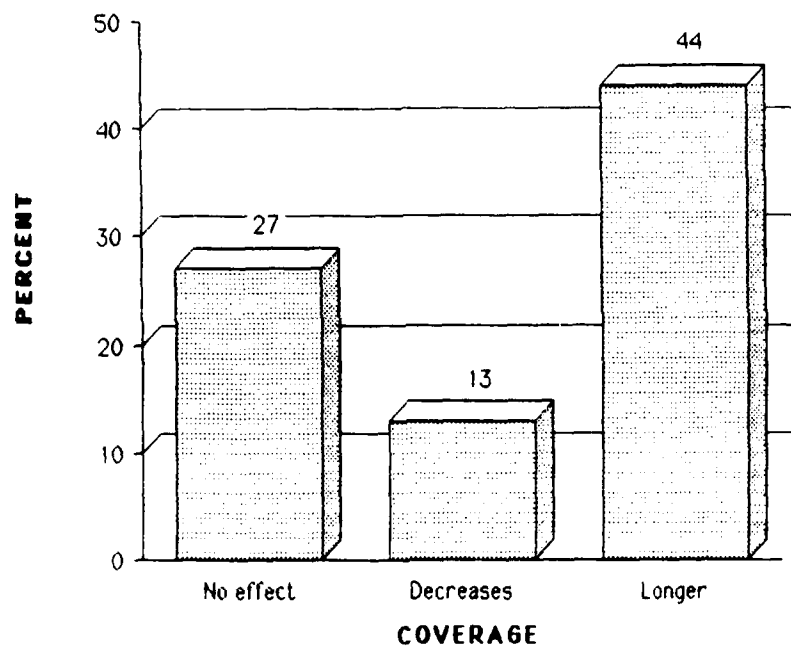
APPENDIX C

DOES PRESS COVERAGE HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE  
CHANCE GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE IN TO TERRORIST DEMANDS



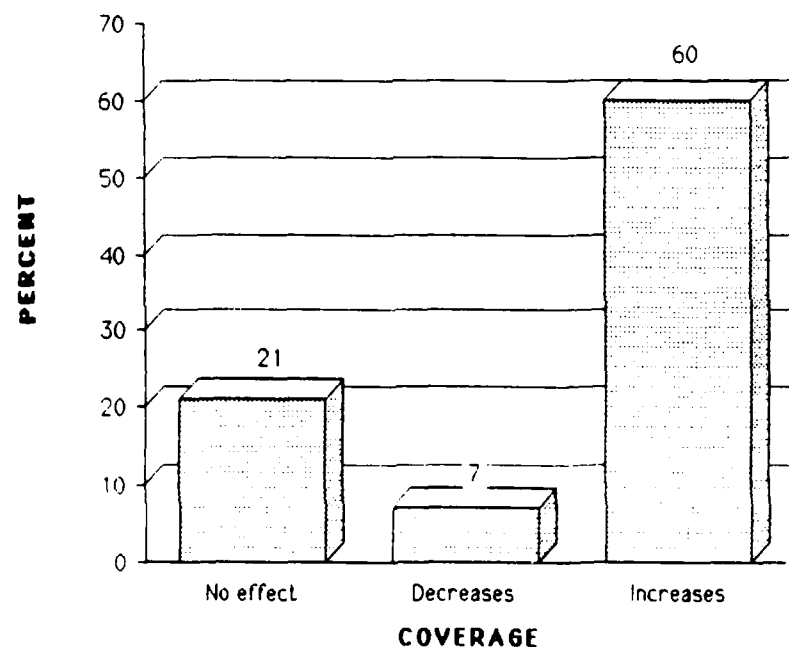
APPENDIX D

**DOES PRESS COVERAGE OF TERRORIST INCIDENTS HAVE AN  
IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE LENGTH OF TIME HOSTAGES ARE HELD**



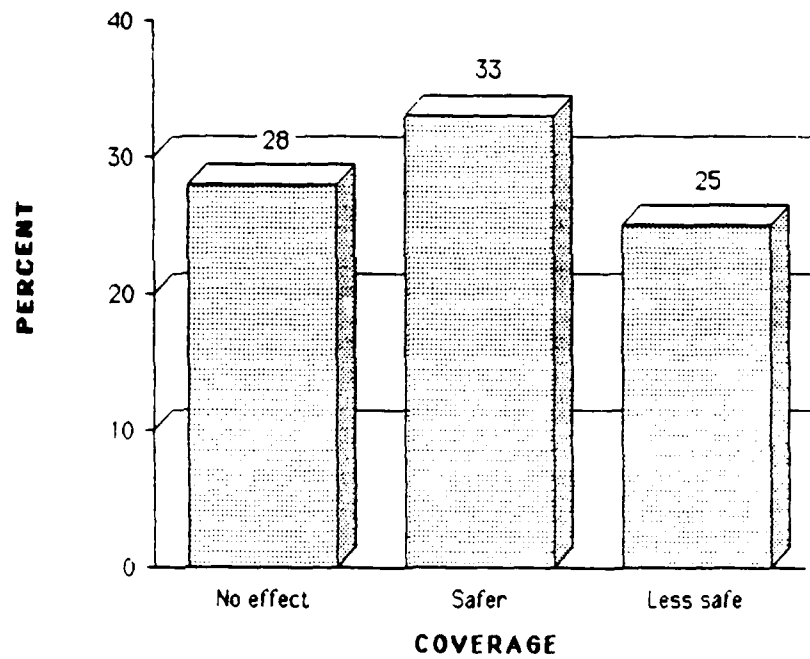
APPENDIX E

**DOES PRESS COVERAGE HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON  
THE CHANCE OF FUTURE TERRORIST ATTACKS**



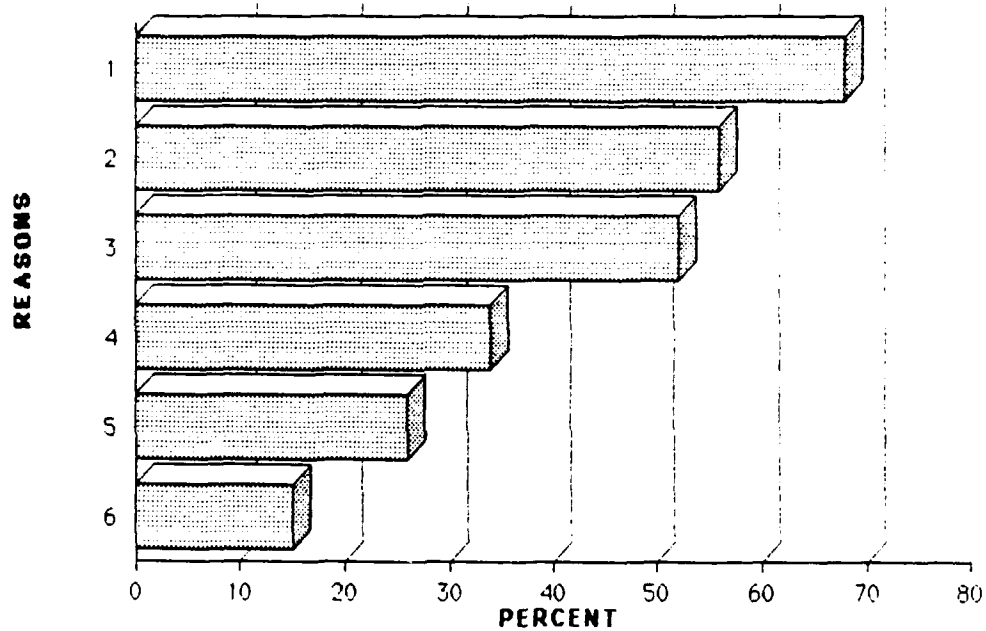
## APPENDIX F

### DOES PRESS COVERAGE HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE SAFETY OF THE HOSTAGES



APPENDIX G

REASONS WHY PUBLIC THINKS THE PRESS FAILS  
TO COVER TERRORISM WELL



1. Competition among news organizations
2. Competition among journalists
3. Terrorists are good at manipulating the media
4. Government is good at manipulating the press
5. News people enjoy showing violence
6. News people sympathize with terrorists

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